



The Canadian Flag



"The Flag which has come to be considered as
the recognized Flag of the Dominion both afloat
and ashore."


The Governor-General, Lord Stanley
12th December, 1891

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1908?
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The Canadian Flag

BY

F. C. WADE

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WITH MR. WADE'S COMPLIMENTS

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The Canadian Flag and Our Schools

At the request of a number of persons interested in the subject, the following letters on the Canadian Flag are reprinted from the News-Advertiser of July 1st, and August 8th and 12th; the first was printed on Dominion Day, which seemed a fitting time to launch a protest against the attempt to deprive Canada of her flag.

The more the subject is considered the more incomprehensible does the attempt of the Provincial Government to obliterate the National Flag become. To prohibit the use of the Canadian Flag on the flag-staffs of our Public Schools was the most effective step which could be taken to produce widespread ignorance of our national emblem in coming generations, and by placing it under the ban all that could be done to alienate the respect and affection which ought to *attach* to our country's flag seems to have been attempted. Fortunately, however, foolish Orders-in-Council are not worth the paper they are written on in the face of the just indignation of the public, and the action which has been taken by the School Trustees of Victoria, Vancouver, New Westminster and elsewhere, shows that the Canadian spirit is healthy and vigorous.

The point always dwelt on by the apologists for the action of the Provincial Government is that in order to unity of Empire there must be but one flag and one Sovereign. One Sovereign, certainly, but why one flag? Is Canada the only part of the Empire which has a flag of her own? What about Australia, New Zealand and South Africa? What about India, Ceylon and Cyprus? What about the Bermudas, the Bahamas, and Barbadoes? What about Trinidad, Antigua, Grenada, British Guiana, the Straits Settlements and the Malay Straits? All these places, from India with its 300,000,000, to Antigua with its 34,971, have flags of their own, which no one has sought to pull down. And yet the Empire continues to flourish. Nor have they been called "disruptionists" for loving their flag.

It is to be hoped that notwithstanding its Order-in-Council and the announcement of the Minister of Education that he had appealed to the Eastern Provinces to follow his example, the Provincial Government will speedily see its way to withdraw its order and make some amends for the insult put upon "the recognized Flag of the Dominion, both ashore and afloat."

F. C. WADE.

I

When Dr. Young, Provincial Minister of Education, decided that the Union Jack alone should be flown on every school flag staff, it seemed to me that he had made a serious mistake. At the Trustees' Institute previously it had been decided that the Canadian ensign should be flown on the schools. At a meeting of the School Trustees of Vancouver, held afterwards in January, it was decided to fly the Canadian ensign. The same decision was arrived at by other Boards of Trustees in the Province. It seems most probable that the Canadian flag will be generally adopted throughout the Province. And why not? It is only the Union Jack with the badge of the Dominion added—just as this Empire overseas is something added to Great Britain. The Union Jack was designed to represent the union of England, Ireland and Scotland. Was the addition of the Dominion of Canada so unimportant as to deserve no recognition?

Immediately after Confederation Canadian ship owners adopted the plan of placing the heraldic arms of Canada as a badge upon the red ensign. On May 22nd, 1874, the Admiralty notified the Colonial Office that "no objection would be raised to any vessel registered as belonging to one of Her Majesty's Colonies flying the red ensign with the badge of the Colony on the flag." In the following year narrower counsels prevailed, and the permission was revoked. In October, 1889, a statute was passed to compel all Her Majesty's ships, whether colonial registered or not, to carry the red ensign only. Finally, in June, 1898, the Canadian Government applied for the issue of a general warrant which would permit Canadian registered ships to fly the red ensign usually worn by merchant ships with the Canadian Coat-of-Arms. The history of subsequent events was given by Mr. J. S. Ewart recently as follows:

"Objection being made, the Canadian Government passed an order-in-council (31st October, 1890), in support of the previous application, and Sir Charles Tupper wrote to the Governor-General (Lord Stanley) on the 13th November, 1890, saying that: 'Since about 1869 our ships have been encouraged by the Government of Canada to use the red ensign with the Canadian Coat-of-Arms in the fly These ships are in every quarter of the globe.'

Afterwards (7th November, 1891), Vice-Admiral Watson, then stationed at Halifax, wrote to the Governor-General:

'I have read with much interest the correspondence relating to the Canadian flag. It will certainly be a great pity if the Home Government

insists on its abolition. As a matter of feeling and sentiment, I know for certain it will cause very great dissatisfaction in the Colony, and I can see no good result from the enforcement of the order, but on the contrary I think a change enforced might give rise to trouble and will certainly cause general ill-feeling. They are proud of their flag, and their pride in my opinion should be encouraged and not dampened.'

The Governor-General took the same view, and in writing to the Colonial Secretary (12th December, 1891), referred to the use of the red ensign with the Canadian badge not only at sea but on shore, where its appearance had become somewhat general:—

'It has been one of the objects of the Dominion, as of Imperial policy, to emphasise the fact that, by Confederation, Canada became not a mere assemblage of provinces, but one united Dominion, and though no actual order has ever been issued, the Dominion Government has encouraged by precept and example the use on all public buildings throughout the provinces of the red ensign, with the Canadian badge in the fly.

Of course it may be replied that no restriction exists with respect to flags which may be hoisted on shore, but I submit that the flag is one which has come to be considered as **THE RECOGNISED FLAG OF THE DOMINION, BOTH ASHORE AND AFLOAT**, and on sentimental grounds I think there is much to be said for its retention, as it expresses at once the unity of the several provinces of the Dominion and the identity of their flag, with the colors hoisted by the ships of the Mother Country.'

Lord Stanley added that the enforcement of the order 'would be attended with an amount of unpopularity very disproportionate to the occasion, and at a moment when it is more than usually important to foster rather than to check an independent spirit in the Dominion which, combined with loyal sentiments towards the Mother Country, I look upon as the only possible barrier to the annexationist feeling which is so strongly pressed upon us by persons acting in the interests of the United States.'

Thus urged the Admiralty gave way (2nd February, 1892), at the same time retaining its opinion that 'there are not unimportant objections to interfere with the simplicity and uniformity of national colors. Whatever is conceded to Canada will almost certainly be claimed by the other Colonial Governments.'

The warrant issued by the Admiralty (2nd February, 1892), is as follows: 'We do, therefore, by virtue of the power and authority vested in us, hereby warrant and authorise the red ensign of Her Majesty's fleet with the Canadian Coat-of-Arms in the fly, to be used on board vessels registered in the Dominion.'

Thus was the question of the proper flag for Canadian vessels at sea disposed of. As Sir Charles Tupper wrote, Canadian Governments since Confederation had favored the use of the red ensign with the Canadian Coat-of-Arms. Sir Charles Tupper himself favored it. Vice-Admiral Watson not only favored it, but added the noble words: "They are proud of their flag, and their pride in my opinion should be encouraged and not dampened." Lord Stanley, then Governor-General of Canada, favored it as "expressing at once the unity of the several provinces of the Dominion and the identity of their flag with the colors hoisted by the ships of the Mother Country." Finally, the Admiralty and the British Government adopted it. Are we to be told in the face of all this that it is disloyal to fly the Canadian flag, and that the addition of the arms of the Dominion to the red ensign means the disruption of the Empire? Are we to denounce all Canadian Governments since Confederation, Sir Charles Tupper, Admiral Watson, the late lamented Lord Stanley, the British Admiralty, the Colonial Office and successive British Governments, and take up with the views of your contributor? I, for one, say no.

We are next informed, on the strength of a quotation from "Canada," that although Canada's flag is all right at sea, it is all wrong on land; afloat it may be necessary as a mark of identification, but ashore it means disruption of the Empire. It certainly must require a curious kind of reasoning to arrive at two such opposite conclusions. Some years ago the London "Times," though favoring the Union Jack, declared: "There is indeed no common agreement as to what the national flag is," and instanced Lord Hawkesbury as insisting that it is the red ensign and nothing else. It also quoted the letter by Lord Knollys, the King's private secretary, to the Vicar of St. Michael's Folkstone.

The Times added:—

✓ "You can always fly the Union Jack," said Lord Knollys. Provided it is the Union Jack properly made and properly hoisted, it does not much matter, on shore, whether it is flown in the form of the red ensign or of any other ensign duly recognised by authority. But, lest naval susceptibilities should be offended, the Union Jack by itself." According

to Lord Hawkesbury then, the red ensign is the national flag, and according to the Times, it does not much matter on shore if it is flown in the shape of the red ensign, it is only a matter of naval susceptibilities. So that it is quite proper to float in England the red ensign on shore as well as at sea, and the only impropriety can be in adding the Canadian badge on the flag when it is flown in Canada.

Is this then an impropriety? Must the red ensign be hauled down from the schools because while our loyalty to the Mother Land is undiminished, we are proud enough of Canada to add her arms to the parent flag to distinguish our identity while reasserting our loyalty in the most positive form? Are not the sentiments of Vice-Admiral Watson more generous and more statesmanlike, and more British: "They are proud of their flag, and their pride, in my opinion, should be encouraged and not dampened." Are not the words of Lord Stanley more in accord both with Canadian sentiments and the breadth of view so distinctive of real British statesmanship: "The flag is one which has come to be considered as the recognised flag of the Dominion both ashore and afloat, and on sentimental grounds I think there is much to be said for its retention, as it expresses at once the unity of the several provinces of the Dominion and the identity of their flag with the colors hoisted by the ships of the Mother Country."

I sincerely hope that Dr. Young, if he has decided that the Canadian flag is to be hauled down from our schools, will reconsider the question. The flag which we have adopted in Canada since Confederation is good enough for our children. We have learned to respect it and to love it. It has a warm place in the heart of every Canadian child who is old enough to know it. It stands for more than the mere union of England, Ireland and Scotland; it stands for Canada as well. It stands for the Empire as we regard it to-day, rather than for the state of things which obtained in the reign of James I. There is no reason why in the name of false loyalty the Canadian flag should suffer the least interference, and certainly there is no excuse for its degradation. Let us have the Union Jack by all means, but in the form of the red ensign, with the arms of the Dominion properly displayed in their old and proud position.

II

It was inevitable that the decision of the Minister of Education to exclude the Canadian flag from the flagstaffs of our schools would cause widespread dissatisfaction. I took the liberty of saying so at the time, and current events show that I was not in the wrong.

Apologists for the action of the Minister seek to disarm criticism by a great deal of fulsome adulation of the Union Jack. This is all very well in its way. The Union Jack is much more in evidence in Canada than it is in England, and is, I hope, quite as much honored and beloved here as there. We do not, it is true, indulge in rhapsodies about "the glorious heritage of membership in the grandest nation on earth," "the noble traditions of a noble race," "the bravest flag and the best constitution," etc., ad nauseam. It is not necessary to do so, and besides there is nothing more un-British than vulgar brag, which we are frequently told is the special prerogative of the despised "Usonian."

Our loyalty to the Union Jack, however, is not in question. The single fact with which we have to deal is that by an order of the Minister of Education the Canadian flag has been hauled down from every flagstaff in British Columbia. What we are entitled to demand, and do demand, is an explanation of this unnecessary and offensive order.

At the third annual convention of the British Columbia Association of School Trustees, held at Nelson on February 13th and 14th, 1907, it was unanimously resolved "That a provision should be inserted in the School Act making it compulsory to fly the Canadian flag on all school houses during school hours," and in the following year the same association asked the Government to supply the necessary flags for all rural schools. Strange to say, the unanimous request of the school trustees that the Canadian flag be flown was followed by an announcement that only the Union Jack would be allowed to be flown from the schools, which is tantamount to an order that the Canadian flag must be hauled down.

The reason given for this astonishing order was that "the so-called Canadian flag, the Canadian merchant service ensign, with the Canadian Coat-of-Arms in the fly has no official status outside the merchant service," and the announcement was followed by this further illuminating information, "so Dr. Young wrote the officials in the East urging them to adopt the official emblem, the Union Jack." So that we have British Columbia's Minister of Education, not only ordering down the Canadian

flag in British Columbia, but endeavoring to have it ordered down in the Eastern Provinces as well.

What importance is to be attached to the declaration "that the Canadian flag has no official status outside the merchant service," it is difficult to see. In 1890, and for some years previous an attempt was made to haul down the Canadian flag from our ships at sea on the same ground that it had no official status. Sir Charles Tupper, in reply, directed the following protest to the Governor-General, Lord Stanley:

"Since about 1869 our ships have been encouraged by the Government of Canada to use the red ensign with the Canadian Coat-of-Arms in the fly. . . . Those ships are in every quarter of the globe."

Lord Stanley, the representative at that time of His Majesty, the King, subsequently wrote the Colonial Secretary as follows:

"It has been one of the objects of the Dominion, as of Imperial policy, to emphasise the fact that, by Confederation, Canada became not a mere assemblage of provinces, but one united Dominion, and though no actual order has ever been issued, the Dominion Government has encouraged by precept and example the use on all public buildings throughout the provinces of the red ensign, with the Canadian badge in the fly.

Of course it may be replied that no restriction exists with respect to flags which may be hoisted on shore, but I submit that the flag is one which has come to be considered as **THE RECOGNISED FLAG OF THE DOMINION, BOTH ASHORE AND AFLOAT**, and on sentimental grounds I think there is much to be said for its retention, as it expresses at once the unity of the several provinces of the Dominion and the identity of their flag with the colors hoisted by the ships of the Mother Country."

The British Government and the Admiralty took the same view as Lord Stanley, and on February 2nd, 1892, the Admiralty issued its warrant authorising the use of the Canadian flag on all vessels registered in the Dominion.

Lord Stanley's statement is important in several ways. In the first place it grants that "no restriction exists with respect to flags which may be hoisted on shore." secondly, there is his unambiguous declaration that "the flag is one which has come to be considered as "the recognised flag of the Dominion both ashore and afloat." What more than this is needed? If

there is no restriction as to the flag to be hoisted on shore, and the Canadian flag is the "recognised flag of the Dominion" on land, why does Dr. Young order that it must not be flown over British Columbia schools? Why does he pursue it into the Eastern Provinces, and seek to exclude it there? Unquestionably the red ensign with the Canadian badge has long been the recognised flag of the Dominion on land as well as at sea. The British Admiralty asserted this in the plainest terms when it presented the Hon. Rudolf Lemieux, who accompanied the remains of the late Hon. Raymond Prefontaine to Canada, with two Canadian ensigns, one to fly at half-mast on His Majesty's ship *Dominion*, which carried the body over the Atlantic, and the other to enshroud the casket of the dead statesman. When the British Government and Admiralty take pleasure in acknowledging our flag, are we to be deprived of it by the order of a provincial politician, and is it to be cried down by a few calamity howlers who seem to think that Canadianism means disruption of the Empire?

In answer to this position, Mr. Ewart has been quoted as stating that "Improperly it (meaning the Canadian flag) has appeared upon land." Against this style of controversy, I emphatically protest. What Mr. Ewart did say was:

"The Canadian flag—the only flag authorised for distinctively Canadian use—is this red ensign with the Canadian badge in the fly. Its first appearance on Canadian vessels was an irregularity. With some difficulty Imperial sanction for its use at sea was obtained. Improperly, but with increasing frequency, it has appeared upon land; has been displayed upon our public buildings; has been encouraged by our Government both "by precept and example," and has at length been referred to by a Governor-General as "the recognised flag of the Dominion both ashore and afloat."

Only by suppressing fourteen out of sixteen lines of the paragraph was it possible to make Mr. Ewart appear to take a position directly contrary to that for which he most vigorously contends. Could misrepresentation go further? I would warn over-zealous correspondents that the Union Jack is no more in need of misrepresentation than it is of vulgar brag.

If the objection taken by the British Columbia Minister of Education that "the so-called Canadian flag has no official status outside the merchant service," precluded its use in this Province, it would necessarily render its use in all the rest of the provinces impossible. The shallowness of the excuse has, however, been made clear by the action of New

Brunswick, where last year an amendment to the School Act proposed by Mr. Pugsley, arranged for school boards to fly the Canadian ensign daily, so far as possible, from school buildings, and authorised the Board of Education to appropriate a reasonable amount for the purchase of flags for use when trustees might be unwilling to bear the expense. This awful action on the part of the legislators of New Brunswick cannot have been heard of in some quarters here or no doubt they would have been denounced as "separatists" and "disruptionists" with a screaming accompaniment on the subject of "One flag, one sovereign," &c., &c., and an invitation to lose themselves in the wilds of the United States along with all who entertained similar views, including Sir Charles Tupper, Lord Stanley, the British Government and Admiralty.

The only difference between the British red ensign and the Canadian flag is that the latter carries in the fly the arms of the Dominion. Both are made up in chief of the Union Jack. What is there then about the Canadian arms to derogate from the Union Jack and the sentiments which it represents? The "*écu complet*," the complete shield, is made up of the arms of the various provinces. In the arms of Ontario and Manitoba the Cross of St. George signifies British nationality. In the arms of Quebec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan and in the proposed design for the Yukon the "Lion of England" denotes British dominion. In the proposed arms of Alberta, I think a bend barry alludes to the name, being taken from the arms of the late Prince Albert. Finally the arms of British Columbia display the Union Jack itself. These various coats of arms, of course, embody many other things, but every one in turn is a renewed assertion of British sovereignty; and yet we are told that by adding the Canadian arms to the red ensign on shore, we are seeking to disrupt the Empire! Is it not about time that the publication of such unutterable bosh at the expense of a long suffering community should come to an end?

In the meantime it seems that some enthusiast in North Vancouver proposes that the schools there should celebrate the issue of the new order of the Minister of Education by hoisting the Union Jack with unusual manifestations of joy next month. May the day never dawn when any of us will experience any other than feelings of elation at the hoisting of the battle flag of Great Britain. On this occasion, however, no one can fail to be sensible of the fact that the Canadian flag has been ordered down.

It is to be hoped that every effort will be made to make it clear that the celebration is not of that event as well. There are always a few misguided people who derive pleasure out of any seeming victory no matter

at what expense, but nothing can be clearer than it would be not only ill-bred, but mischievous to the last degree, to connect the hoisting of the Union Jack with an attempted humiliation of any class of British subjects.

III

I have read with interest the letter of Mr. Walter J. Walker, entitled, "Canadian Flag." We all know what the Canadian flag is. We have been familiar with it since childhood, and have grown up with it. It was no doubt because the expression "Canadian flag" conveys such a definite impression that Mr. Pope in his brochure termed the Union Jack "the flag of Canada" rather than "the Canadian flag."

Mr. Walker agrees with me to a very great extent. "Mr. Wade," he says, "establishes his case, so far as he goes, respecting the use of the present makeshift. Personally I would have continued its use to serve the purpose of a Dominion flag, until a proper one be appointed, as I consider the Union Jack in the canton quite sufficient to show its connection with the Empire."

Apparently, then, we go a good way together along the same road. He favors a Canadian flag, and "personally" would have continued the present "makeshift" until a proper one be appointed. If he favors it "personally" surely there is no other capacity in which he can oppose it. If we all "personally" favor it, why is it necessary to pull it down?

It is somewhat disparaging to speak of the flag which Lord Stanley seventeen years ago declared had "come to be considered as the recognised flag of the Dominion, both ashore and afloat," as a "makeshift." Flags, like the political constitutions of the countries they represent, go through a process of evolution and are all "makeshifts" at some time or other. On the same ground that a flag until it has reached its final development is only a makeshift, the Union Jack itself may be said to have been a makeshift from 1603 till 1801, nearly 200 years. It was about twice as long in its incomplete form as it has been in its complete form. When the monarchies of England and Scotland were united by the accession of James I, the St. Andrew's cross was made the ground of the common national flag. This was the original Union Jack. During the Commonwealth the Irish harp was added. At the Restoration the harp was struck out. Finally the union with Ireland in 1801 gave the present

Union Jack. The same may be said of the evolution of the American flag, and probably of most others. Looked at retrospectively they were all makeshifts at some time or other.

I cannot agree with Mr. Walker that the flag must be called "deficient" because the shield does not represent the whole of Canada. As other territories are from time to time carved out of the Dominion, each will have a separate coat of arms, which will have to be added to the shield. Is the flag of the United States "deficient" because a new star is added from time to time when a new State is admitted? Flags are a growth. The Union Jack itself went through many changes in two centuries to indicate additions of territorial sovereignty. Why should not the Canadian flag do the same? Retrospectively a flag may appear deficient. For the present, and so long as we cannot anticipate history, it is sufficient.

Mr. Walker proceeds: "It may serve very well for the Canadian mercantile marine; but I myself, 24 years a Canadian, would prefer something more dignified than an augmentation of a mercantile flag for the emblem of the Dominion of Canada." The words "augmentation of a mercantile flag" sound discouraging. It is like speaking of people as being "in trade." It sounds better when we say that the Red Ensign, to use the words of the "London Times," is that form of the Union Jack "which is presented by every British vessel at sea, not being a man of war or a vessel otherwise privileged to wear a different design." It is Great Britain itself, socially, industrially and in every way with the exceptions mentioned. Is there any objection to the Canadian flag being an augmentation of such a flag. If so I fail to see it. Indeed there is some question whether the red ensign itself is not the national flag of England. To quote the "Times" again:—"There is, indeed, no common agreement as to what the national flag is. Lord Hawkesbury insists that it is the red ensign and nothing else." The reason the "Times" gives for favoring the use of the Union Jack on shore in England, instead of the red ensign, is "lest naval susceptibilities should be offended." Certainly no such reason obtains here.

I will not follow Mr. Walker through the rest of his letter. It may be possible in the future to improve on the present design of the Canadian flag, just as it is reasonable to suppose that with the growth of the British Empire the Union Jack itself may be altered or augmented to give expression to the new conditions territorially. But it does not follow that because our flag is undergoing a process of evolution, it should be ordered down!

And what justification is there for saying "that if the Minister had done otherwise he would have acted in an abnormal manner?" Did the Legislature of New Brunswick act "abnormally" in providing that the Canadian ensign must be flown on every school in that Province? Would it be abnormal to allow the flag, "which has come to be considered as the recognised flag of the Dominion, both ashore and afloat"—to use the words of Lord Stanley—to continue to fly from the flagstaffs of our schools? If the Canadian ensign is the recognised flag, surely it would be normal rather than abnormal to continue to fly it? Unless there is something occult in the science of flag flying which we ordinary mortals cannot comprehend, I must confess that I can discover no force whatever in Mr. Walker's reasoning in this connection.

The reference to politics in Mr. Walker's letter seems quite uncalled for. As long as politicians govern us they are responsible for the government which we receive. I confess I would feel freer, if anything, in attacking a Liberal Government should it proscribe the Canadian flag. The question is one, however, of a national rather than a party nature, and he would be a degenerate indeed who would allow his party allegiance to displace his love of his country and his flag.

F. C. WADE.

Vancouver, August 12th, 1908.



